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## Manifestation of Gender Differences in Pakistani Society: A Critical Study of Women's Writings

Maryyam Jabeen<sup>1\*</sup>, Faiza Afzal<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*This study critically examines the manifestation of gender differences in Pakistani society through the lens of women's writings. Pakistani society is marked by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and gender disparities that affect women's lives in various ways. This research explores how Pakistani women writers use their literary works to challenge these gender disparities and expose the limitations imposed upon them by society. The study employs a qualitative research approach and analyzes a range of literary works authored by Pakistani women, including novels, short stories, and poetry. By examining these works, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which gender roles and inequalities are constructed and reproduced in Pakistani society. The findings of the study suggest that women writers in Pakistan are using their voices to resist patriarchal norms, subvert gendered power structures, and create a space for themselves within a society that often seeks to marginalize them. The study concludes by suggesting that the insights gained through this research can help promote greater gender equality and social justice in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Gender differences; Women's writings; Patriarchal society; Women's independence

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<sup>1</sup>Department of English, University of Sahiwal, Pakistan.

\*Corresponding author: Email: [jabeenm666@gmail.com](mailto:jabeenm666@gmail.com)

### Publication Details:

Article Received: October 28, 2022

Article Published: March 21, 2023

Article DOI: 10.53057/irls/2023.5.1.4

### Recommended citation:

Jabeen, M. and Afzal, F. (2023). Manifestation of Gender Differences in Pakistani Society: A Critical Study of Women's Writings. *International Review of Literary Studies*, vol. 5. No. 1, pp. 31-38.

<https://irlsjournal.com/index.php/Irls>

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## **Introduction:**

Females play an essential role in the progress and development of any society from birth to the end of their life. But they consider their whole life as “weak”, and men consider as “strong” gender in society. They are oppressed in every field of life, such as in education, the workplace, and domestically. They face discrimination on the bases of responsibilities, productive and reproductive work, educational institution, access to power, and use of the source. In gender differences, they faced domestic abuse, early marriage, forced marriage, honour killing, and sexual violence. They also face discrimination in the educational sector; we see more ratio of male who gets higher education as compared to female. The female literacy rate in Pakistan, according to statistics from 2019, was 46.49% (Imran et al., 2020).

To highlight female issues in Pakistani society, many writers wrote poems, novels, plays, autobiographies, short stories, and fiction to empower women in society so that they raise their voices against violence. Literature has been an important medium of the social and cultural construction of gender for centuries. Literature always portrayed an accurate picture of society. The writers wrote about the topic that happened in contemporary society. In Pakistan, writers have started to write about female discrimination not only in the domestic sphere but also in public. Women in Pakistan still face a dominant patriarchal society in modern times. Male writers also wrote about the challenges that women faced in their life. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where females face many problems and struggle to get their rights. They don't take decisions in their life independently; they depend on their father, husband, and Brother. Feminism writers highlight these issues through writing, Novels, poetry, fiction, etc.

Feminism is about awareness and equality of female rights (Allan, 1997). For the protection of females from inequality, oppression, and unequal rights to health and education, feminism was founded. The famous feminist writers in Pakistan are Parveen Shakir, Kishwar Naheed, Fahmida Riaz, Mohammed Hanif, Mohsin Hamid, and Umera Ahmed, Bapsi Sidhwa. Allama Iqbal also wrote about the rights of women. Rehman said (2015) feministic approach came from British Imperialism which brought the notion of female empowerment and basic right for women. Feminist literature provides a fascinating and honest account of women's awaking, awareness, and empowerment which highlights the complexity of life in a male-dominant patriarchal society.

## **Objectives of Research:**

The objectives of the present research are given below:

- To investigate the representation of gender differences through different writing of Pakistan's writers.
- To analyze the language used for gender discrimination in the domestic as well as the public sphere.
- To investigate the patriarchal structure in Pakistan through different writers' writing.
- To analysis the discursive language males used for their supremacy.

To meet the above mentioned objectives, the following questions have been designed to get the answers from the selected writings.

## **Research Questions:**

Research questions are given below:

- How do women's writings highlight gender differences in Pakistan?
- Why females' figures are discriminated in domestic and public spheres in Pakistan's society?
- How does discursive language is used to show male dominance over females in Pakistani society?

## **Literature Reviews:**

Gender difference is, and has been, a provoking and problematic issue in human life not only in the east but also in the west. Zia Ahmad (2009) said literature plays a crucial role to represent the social change that happened in society. Female representation in literature helps to understand the position and contribution of the female in society. Pakistani women across the country found themselves under different measures of patriarchy that hindered to restrain of females' equal contribution in public places. (Shamsi, 2005). Gender difference is a social difference between men and women. Nomad. A

and Bayer J.M gave a “theory of dominance” according to this theory, power and status unequally distribute among gender. This theory shows the dominance of males in society.

Pakistan is a male-dominated society; males are dominant and have power in all fields of life and educated and non-educated have the same proportion. The female authors highlight the patriarchal society through their writing (Neluke Silver, 2003). According to Felski (2003), females are locked and imprisoned in masculine societies and male houses. The gender difference can also be seen in the education sector as in the domestic and working place. Pakistan is a society where females suffer from all sorts of discrimination, resulting in low social, economic, and political status in society (Chaudhry and Rehman, 2009). Pakistani authors not only female but also male highlights all types of discrimination on the bases of gender.

In his play “A Doll’s house”, Ibsen (1879) tries to highlight feminism. Afterward, other writers in the West took forward this notion, for example, Thomas Hardy (1892), highlights the women violence in his novel *Tess of the d’ Tuberville’s*. Woolf portrayed women in her book “*A Room of One’s Woolf*” that are not equally treated. Furthermore, in western literature, the representation of a female object has existed for many years, in literature; they highlight females’ issues and awareness about their rights. All the same, the central theme of the western writer was marginalization, and to promote the rights of subjugated people apart from it post-colonization and feminism were both. In post-colonization people are treated based on their culture, economy, and gender. In her novel “*An American Brat*”, Sidhwa (1994) represent the cross-culture influence on society and the thought processes of the colonized people under their customs and tradition. Ferouza the protagonist of the novel leaves Pakistan to get higher education and to become a civilized citizen, she traveled to the USA. Her novel ‘*The Ice Candy Man*’ also portrays the situation of women and their bodies. The bodies of women are also colonized in the Subcontinent.

#### **Theoretical Framework:**

Gender is constructed based on that women are subordinate to men in society. To investigate the gender difference in Pakistan society we use the theory of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). She said that men had made women the “other” in society by creating a false aura of “mystery” and discursive language around them. The male stereotypes females and used it as an excuse to construct society into a patriarchy. Pakistan society is patriarchal in which men have dominancy. The novel of Mohammed Hanif “*our Lady Alice Bhatti*” also shows the patriarchal element in our society. The stereotypes about men’s superiority also impose upon females by the use of `religion. Beauvoir said, “One is not born a woman, but become one” by using discourse they made women is weak and emotional. Females are capable of choice as males, and thus can choose to element themselves, and gain ‘transcendence’ a position where one chooses one’s freedom. She said like men women are also capable to choose everything freely. Fahmida Riaz highlights imprisoned women in her poem “*Ek larki Sy*” and also Parveen Shakir in her poem “*Sirf Ek larki*”. Judith Butler (1990, 1993, and 2004) gave the theory of performativity. According to Butler “individuals performs gender through the repetition or citation of prior, autorotation set of practice”. Men use language, tradition and religious practice to control and show their supremacy over women.

#### **Research Methodology:**

This paper is an analysis of Pakistani writers’ writing on gender differences and language use to suppressed women. The issues they highlight like the patriarchal system, domestic violence, and female oppression in every field of life and the Islamic ideology is also used to oppress females. These elements are analyzed in the theory of feminism by Judith Butler and Simon de Beauvoir. The Feminist Analysis according to Tyson (1998) “examines how literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. In this research study, the qualitative method has been used to analyze the research. The textual analysis has been used to analyze the different writing on gender differences.

In this study textual analysis technique has been used to analyze data. The real nature can be established with sufficient description but the social world is not questionable (Halliday, 2000). Descriptive is that which contains some valuable data. We have used secondary-type data for this research. The data is get from the novels, plays and poems. The sample used for this research is collected from the novels, play and poems of Pakistani writers that are about feminism.

## Data analysis and Discussion:

### *Gender difference through poetry in Pakistani Society:*

Gender difference is a social construction, in which males are dominant and females are under the male dominancy. The Pakistani female poets highlight gender difference issues in their poetry, Fahmida Riaz, Ishrat Afreen, Parveen Shakir and Kishwar Naheed, and many more. In this analysis of data, we analyze three poems by Pakistani poetess Parveen Shakir and Fahmida Riaz. First, we analyze two poems by Parveen Shakir in which she wrote about female discrimination, and how they are treated in Pakistan's society.

#### 1. *şirf ěk larķĩ* – [Just a Girl]

*apnē sard kamrē mēn  
maiñ udāas bēṭhĩ hūñ  
maiñ nahĩn maagar kuch bhĩ  
sañgdill riwājoñ ke  
aāhnĩ ḥiṣāroñ mēin  
umār qēd kĩ mulzim  
şirf ěk larķĩ hūñ!.....*  
[In my cold room,  
I am sitting saddened  
I am not, however, anything but  
In hard-hearted traditions  
In iron fortresses  
Accused of life imprisonment,  
Just a girl!]

#### 2. Nick Name

*Tum mujh ko gurĩyā kehtē ho  
ṭhĩk hĩ kahtē ho \_\_\_\_\_!*  
*Khēlnē wālē sab hāthoñ ko maiñ gurĩyā hĩ lagtĩ hūñ  
Jo pehnāa do, mujh peh sajeē gā  
Tum mujh ko gurĩyā kehtē ho  
ṭhĩk hĩ kehtē ho!.....*  
[You call me Doll  
You are quite right!  
I appear like a doll to all playing hands  
Whatever you make me wear will suit me  
You call me Doll  
You are quite right!]  
(Parveen Shakir)

Parveen Shakir in her first poem, “Sif Ek Larki” portrayed that life of women or girls are like imprisonment. This shows a woman is not independent and free to take her decisions and fulfill their desires and goals in life. Her life is completely covered with difficulties and restrictions that mean to diminish her individuality and freedom. She says, “Having touched you” she would return if she had wings or were air. She realized that women are just a girl in the eyes of patriarchal society regardless she has their desires, dreams, and abilities. She highlights how her society treats a woman as mere girls, regardless of age and experience. She is prisoned, and she has no freedom like a man in society. She faced many restrictions in every step of her life, just because of the girl.

In the second poem, Shakir presents, female existence is not more than a doll. A play for those who want to control the females' life. Kishwar Naheed (b. 1940) a prominent feminist Urdu poet and contemporary of Shakir said; “Each man in the sub-continent wants a woman to behave like a doll during the day and at night like a prostitute”. Women are treated, like a doll in society, and every man wants to control all actions and functions of her. Just like a doll woman is not free to choose a dress

for herself, the choice of dress would be selected according to the whole society regardless of a person's desire. In society, she is handled over anymore without her own opinion and desire in the matter like a doll. She further said women have no right to freedom of speech and expression; her opinions have no weightage like a man's. She speaks just only when she is allowed otherwise she has no right to speak in any type of affair. Women are not more than decorative pieces in society like a doll.

**Fahmida Riaz** was also a feminist poetess of Pakistan. She wrote about feminism. She also came under the scrutiny of the government due to her publishing activities and there were fourteen cases of sedition filed against the Magazine. One of the charges could have meant the death penalty for Riaz so she went into exile to India, in 1982. Then she came back in 1988 to Pakistan. She wrote about discrimination and violence against female rights. She also wrote about the patriarchal system. The name "Ik larki se" (to a girl) which was selected for this research is about the old tradition imposed on women by the name of religion and culture. She is imprisoned in a house.

*Saṅg-dill riwājoñ kī*  
*Ye imārat-e-kohna*  
*Ye imārat-e-khōna TuuT bhī to saktī haai*  
*Ye asīr-e-shahzādī chhūT bhī to saktī hai*  
*Ye asīr-e-shahzādī .....*  
To a girl  
Of the hard-hearted traditions  
This building  
It can also break  
This captive princess  
The exemption is also possible  
This captive princess

(Fahmida Riaz)

She presents a girl, a woman who is prisoned in a house, and under the authority of a patriarchal system. He said that the girl who is imprisoned and under the siege of the old tradition is feeling sorry for herself, she is trembling from her burden. She wants to say that a girl has no rights, she goes toward self-destructive. She further explains if she continues imprisoned it should be possible that this girl, who follows the old tradition, maybe break this tradition. The captive princess is possible she will be an exemption. They cannot bear the burden of these traditions; she wants to decide her life affairs independently and she wants to become a person who is capable to fulfill their dreams and desires.

*Gender difference through novels in Pakistani Society:*

Not only does Pakistani female writer highlights gender difference issues but male writers also write about it. In this research paper studies just one novel by Mohammed Hanif and Bapsi Sidhwa. Mohammed Hanif is a Pakistani English novelist. He wrote a novel with the name of "Our lady Allice Bhatti (2011)" in this novel he represents a female who is discriminated based on gender, religion, and class in society. The story of the novel revolves around the girl Allice Bhatti who faces much discrimination in her life from education to till her death. This novel shows the corrupt Pakistan society. This shows the true picture of the patriarchal and male-dominance system in Pakistani society.

In a patriarchal society, female is considered inferior and they just live or enslave at home, they are treated badly, cared child's, and raise a child (Imran and Ismail, 2022). They have no freedom of speech and their all rights are oppressed. In a patriarchal society, females are killed in the name of honor. Mohammed Hanif expresses this oppression in his novel.

"Not a single day – when she didn't see a woman shot or hacked, strangled or suffocated, poisoned or burnt, hanged or buried alive" (Chapter 12, P.142, Our Lady Alice Bhatti).

In our patriarchal society males use females for their interests. The above extract reflects the experience of Allice Bhatti. She faced many cases in which females were treated badly. Mohammed Hanif also highlights how a female is treated in our society. This statement shows that women are the

property of men, it depends upon them how they are treated by them. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) stated “all oppression creates a state of war; this is no exception.” Men treat women as their pets and do not provide the fundamental needs and rights of life. Women are used to taking revenge for others. Men use women as a toy for their enjoyment.

“Suspicious husband, brother protecting his honor, father protecting his honor, son protecting his honor, jilted lover avenging his honor, feuding farmers setting their water disputes, money lenders collecting their interest” (Chapter 7, p. 96, our lady Alice Bhatti)

The above text shows the relationship between the power of males and females in the novel. Men are powerful and dominant while women have no fundamental rights; men consider them as a toy in their hands and play with them. They treated them as useless creatures. The above text shows the bitter reality of our society that female is used to taking revenge on other. To maintain their power over others they take out their female and slaughter them. This also shows the man’s cunning nature; he used females to take revenge on others because they considered women worthless and useless creatures.

Beauvoir (1949) states that “if you live long enough, you’ll see that every victory turns into a defeat”. This extract also shows the male dominance and the female as a subordinate of him. Men don’t accept her defeat, to take revenge women are the easiest target. The men to maintain their honor and in the name of honor kill their daughters, wife, and sister and also used them to solve disputes.

The second novel selected for this research is “The bride of Pakistan” written by Bapsi Sidhwa (2008). In this novel, she highlights the difficulties that face a girl or woman in her life.

“She’s not going to become a baboo or an officer! No, Allah willing she’ll get married and have children.” (p. 44, The Bride of Pakistan)

This extract reflects that a female has no right to education, and society uses religion for its purpose. According to Pakistani patriarchal society females just marry and birth to the child and take care of their home no more than it. The woman is close to four walls, and she does not enjoy her life. Bringum Young said, “You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation” (p.12). Napoleon said “Give me an educated mother, I shall promise you the birth of civilized, educated nation”

“Women are ... murdered, raped, exploited, and enslaved ... impregnated, beaten up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature.” (p.207)

In societies where the patriarchal system is dominant females are treated as slaves, exploited, and raped. Males practice their inherent to show their dominance over females, considering them as inferior and weak by nature (Imran and Wei, 2019). They consider themselves superior and powerful which made them that they are the only super beings. They used their power to control females they considered that females have no rights and even no feelings. They never decide their life tasks, they depend on their father, brother, and husband. She is prisoned in custom and tradition.

She is marginalized, she has no her own identity, the respect, liberty, and equality are taken for her. The character Zaitoon is the main in this novel. She was brought up by Qasim. He does not consult with her on her life’s important decisions. But he married her forcefully. She said, “I cannot cross my father (p. 87)”. He married her to a tribal man Sakhi. He beat her every time and treated her badly.

“Oh, women get killed for one reason or another... imagined insults, family honor, infidelity...” (p. 206)

Honor killing is common in tribal areas, and women are killed without any hesitation in tribal areas, it is not difficult for them. If any women perform anything which is against the fame and honor of their family, they considered it compulsory to kill her. If they do not do this, then they face many difficulties to perform their traditions (Imran & Hart, 2019). They are labeled as immodest in society, they do this without thinking that it is very shameful. Women have no right to speak in their justification.

The women in Pakistani society are badly treated from their birth to death. Her birth family is not happy and after that, they don’t want to send her to school. In her life, she faced much discrimination on the bases of gender. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where males are dominant,

they treated females as a toy and play with their emotions and feelings. There is a need to teach males, how they should treat a female.

#### *Gender difference through plays in Pakistani Society:*

Pakistan plays also highlight the gender differences issue in Pakistan's society. The discursive language is used by the male to maintain their dominancy over women and oppressed women. Salman Ahmad is a rich businessman (Jenna Doshwar Hey; Drama) who tells his wife if she follows him in all matters and obeys his all words. He threatened his wife with serious consequences if she would disobey him. He said to his wife "you have to tell what I told you. If you do not, I will kick you out of the house" (5). This extract shows the patriarchal system, women have no rights even to speak according to their own choice. They are following all orders of her father, brother, and then-husband. Females are domestically violated and they are considered to work just at home and cares the children.

Fakhra got a job in Dubai, and she wants to go but her mother refuses and said to her that she wants to marry you. Her mother through language imposes on her an ideology that females do not work outside the home but work in a kitchen for her husband and family. Fakhra said; "Maa, I have a very good job offer from Dubai. I wish to avail this opportunity. It will make my future. It will make our future-as soon as I settle there, I will call you all". The mother, rejecting her daughter's request, said, "I will not let you go.....my happiness lies in marrying you off" (12). This shows that in our society any female has the potential to for something she is discouraged and she faced many difficulties throughout her life.

#### **Conclusion**

Pakistan is a society where the patriarchal system is dominant, and females have no fundamental rights. Pakistani writers highlight these issues in their writing as in poetry, novel, and fiction. Not only female writer but male writers also use their power of the pen to spread awareness about this type of violation. Female is a fundamental part of any society. They play an important role in the construction of a good society. This research through different Pakistani writing highlights some issues of gender difference that females face in Pakistani society. Women struggled throughout their whole life. They bear all these, but when their abilities to bear violence diminish, they commit serious action. They suicide and they become a prostitute; as in his novel, Moshin Hamid portrays a woman who is affected by domestic violence. She left her house and became a prostitute. Writers try to highlight these issues and spread awareness of gender differences.

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